

## Staff Disability Forum 'Spotlight' podcast

### Episode 2 transcript (February 2021)

The Guy's and St Thomas Staff Disability Forum present another podcast episode of **Spotlight**.

Listen to our podcast producer, forum member and DESP administrator for diabetes and endocrinology, **Jesse James** interview **Ramzeddine Goudjil** who works as an apprentice administration assistant for Essentia and who is also a member of the forum.

Ramzeddine discusses his experience of living with a disability that affects his sight and also the benefits of applying for the Apprenticeship scheme.

In this episode you will also find some great tips and some recommendations for useful Assistive Technology.

### Podcast transcript

**Jesse:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to the spotlight. A podcast brought to you by the members of the staff disability for guys and St Thomas staff. This podcast highlights, employees, colleagues, and people in the trust who have a disability or long-term health condition who want to share their story, the experiences, and we are happy to provide a platform to do that. I'm the producer, Jesse James. I'm also a member of the staff disability forum as well. Without further ado I'm going to attempt to pronounce the name Ramsey. We have a lot of people in the trust of ethnicity and their names can sometimes be quite hard to pronounce. So if you don't mind, how do we say your full name?

**Ramze:** Hello, Jesse, thank you for having me on today's episode. I can definitely start with that. So name goes as Ramsey and Dean, so Ramsey and then Dean. So if you put that together, Ramsey Dean. Ramsey for short. So people mostly know me as Ramsey.

**Jesse:** When we're talking on teams and we have the meetings and we see the long names, sometimes you don't know how to approach it. So I'm just trying to help everyone else out and myself by asking you, thank you for the clarification.

**Ramze:** No worries.

**Jesse:** I'm so nervous about that. Cause some people can get upset.

**Ramze:** No worries.

**Jesse:** I'm so glad to have you on and I definitely want to thank you specifically because when we started the podcast project, apart from Jenny, you were the first one to have your hands up to say, I'm interested to be on the podcast. I want to share my experience. So thank you for being pretty much the first person outside of the Chair to come up and share your story. We really appreciate that and if you don't mind, would you mind telling us who you are and what you do within the trust, your role and let's learn a bit more about you

**Ramze:** Sure, definitely. So, as I said, my name is Ramsey. I work as a part of the Essentia part of the organisation. So I'm an admin assistant within Essentia. I am an apprentice admin assistant within Essentia. So we help the maintenance, building and community teams, with purchase orders, with quotations and with receipts and invoices and contacting suppliers and just dealing with that part of the business.

**Jesse:** It's the perfect name, because you guys are essential when we're working in the office and things are breaking down. We're always calling you!

**Ramze:** Exactly, We are essential!

**Jesse:** Yeah, it's cool to actually speak to someone who's working on the backbone and though don't get me wrong when the lights are blowing out in the toilet and we get upset and Essentia get on this very quickly. You guys have got a good turn around, glad to have you on. So we spoke offline before this to get comfortable to know each other, but I want the people to get to know you a bit more and in particular with your long-term health conditions, disability, which is something you are never really sure what people like to call their condition or Disability. Does it bother you if we call it a long-term disability or how do you like to frame it?

**Ramze:** You can say it, whichever way you like to be honest, I say disability. So like I say, it defines me. I've lived with it for since birth. Disability is fine.

**Jesse:** Specifically, what is your condition?

**Ramze:** My condition is called optic atrophy seven. So that's what my doctor told me the name of it. So its random name, but yet that's, that's the name of it.

**Jesse:** Okay and you said you were born with it?

**Ramze:** Yeah, it's a genetic condition.

**Jesse:** How long have you been working within the trust?

**Ramze:** Over a year and nearly six months now.

**Jesse:** How are you finding it?

**Ramze:** It's been a fantastic journey. Of course. Learning a lot, getting to know a lot of different people, different part of the strategy. You know, the trust is, is massive with over 18,000 employees. So just getting to know every part of the trust, what they do and, and the different sites that we have and everything else.

**Jesse:** Me and you have actually been with the trust of a similar amount of time. I'm in my 14th month. Digging a little bit deeper. What are your experiences working with the trust with your disability? Your daily roles, your daily tasks, how have you found it and again, we want to understand what you've been doing and any kind of things you might have had to overcome to do your job properly or in a way that's comfortable for you. Tell us a bit about that.

**Ramze:** Definitely. As you know getting the things in place such as software, equipment such as keyboard with a larger sort of icon so I can see them took me a few months at the start because we had to contact access to work and sort out all of this kind of infrastructure first but then after that I've been trying to adapt basically. I'm still trying to get used to it, but I have got a really supportive, team around me. So my line Manager is very supportive. He's helped me throughout and stuck with me. So no matter what happened he's always been supportive and patient and always gave me the benefit of the doubt. So I would like to say that to him as well, because he has been there so without him, it would have been a lot more difficult people have made it a bit easier as well. So I guess it's just that getting to grips with that.

**Jesse:** Now, since you said you had this disability since birth, before you came into the trust. I don't know your life story. How, how hard was it to live with this? Get in a career, you know, from school through to your work experience to get to this point, can you describe that journey as well? How have those experiences shaped you? What kind of difficulty have you had to succeed in to get where you are now? We're interested to hear that.

**Ramze:** It has not always been easy that easy as you can imagine. So there's a lot of hurdles to overcome. So as you said about school and then college, so with my career so firstly, in terms of school and quality. I've always had to work that extra harder to achieve grades because obviously if you can't see what's going on in the board and what the teacher's writing and things then it can be a bit difficult, but then I did have help. So I had note takers and I would be able to sit closer the teacher and things like that. So that made it a bit easier. Then I was able to do same in college and my career. Of course, I had a few jobs part-jobs here and there before this job at the trust I was a volunteer with the RNIB the Royal national Institute for the blind, so I'm

supporting them there and being a part of what they do, because I like to give back to the community, so to speak,

**Jesse:** Did the RNIB help you get this job with the trust? Or how did that come to be?

**Ramze:** Well they do offer employment support and other things like that but with this course, I applied for online the way everyone does and thankfully I had an interview, I think, they liked me and here we are. So definitely it's a very good organisation. So this gives you a lot of support as a visually impaired person, partially sighted.

**Jesse:** Yeah, I think that's definitely something I also want to touch on now. I'm partially sighted as well. Now, visually impaired people sometimes are put under an invisible disability banner because people on the outside can't see what you see. So they don't know. So in terms of your vision, How, how have people perceived you on the street? How have they perceived you even?

**Ramze:** Yeah. That's, that's a good question. When people see me, they don't see my official impairment because it's not apparent, it's not clear, so I don't have a cane, I don't have things of that nature to symbolize that I do have an impairment. So when people do come up to me and see me, or even sometimes at work people don't know until I speak to them and they can see the signs of it or if I am struggling to get somewhere or struggling to do something and that's when they start to realise that. It definitely can be difficult with dealing with society or dealing with the public.

**Jesse:** Do you feel a bit hesitant to ask for help? I mean, you said that you, you know, people might see and then ask for help, but do you feel a bit shy or a bit nervous about asking people, signaling to people that you are? I know in the trust we have the sunflower lanyards as well. I mean, do you have one of those or do you not prefer not to wear them? Do you feel you get help without even asking for it?

**Ramze:** Yeah, I do have a Sunflower lanyard. Where I'm based we don't go around to different sites and things like that. So I'm kind of used to the area I'm in. So in terms of using needing to use it but definitely want to use it in the future especially if I'm walking through the hospital, I can see where things were, not where places are, but where to go. For example, because obviously signs are quite small so you don't know where this wing is, where that wing is, where this room is so when you walk in there's no one saying, okay, do you want me to help you go there? So for example, things that are even facilities, I want it to go to the gym, for example, or to the swimming pool but I haven't been able to, I've asked my manager, unfortunately, he's been busy. So to have someone to reach out to, to get that kind of support, you know, we'll

show you around, we'll take you there, we'll do this, you know that sort of thing.

**Jesse:** I'm curious because I can relate you've made a really good example there. Let's just say you're in a big building and you're trying to find the toilet. And as you just mentioned, which I completely agree with most places that are not government don't have big signs, they don't have the yellow background with a black font. How do you cope on your own? Is there any kind of special tools you use, any advice, how have you managed with situations like that?

**Ramze:** Yeah, that's another good question. So mostly what I try and do is if I can't find my way of course ask for help. So if there's anyone around I will say can you please, excuse me. Can you please show me where this place is or where that place is? So it makes it easier for me instead of wasting 10, 15, 20 minutes looking for it. It can be difficult going to big buildings. For example, hospitals, for example, offices where I don't know the building is like 10 stories high or places if you've never been to. So it can be sometimes difficult. So it's just managing really.

**Jesse:** I can relate because I've always said to people, I can't see you if you're not in my field of vision and a lot of the time you have to be about like an arms stretch away for me to see you clearly and so obviously that can extend to going to places as well. Growing up, I felt a way about asking for help. I had a lot of pride. I never really said anything, but as I've got older, well, I felt like as I've got older, I've grown into my Disability which is a strange thing to say, but a lot of people, and I think this is something I would really like your opinion on a lot of people find disability more associated with older people. So when you're a teen, I found it very challenging to be a younger person with such significant sight loss, because people would expect you at a younger age to be more able.

Yeah, I agree.

**Jesse:** When you're older, people seem to be. I don't want to say more forgiving, but more understanding, but the younger you are with disability not so much, it was a struggle for me personally and I found as things have got easier as I've got older, as well as society and as well as all the tools and technology we have now. I just found it personally a lot more difficult in the younger days, just because of the perception of youth, you know, youth vigor. You know, young are more healthy than the old, but I know that's a very big misconception as well and to be honest with you, even not teen, even like a stopped 30 year old still has that, you know, if you look physically fit in some ways. People don't understand what's going on and especially again, being impartially sighted is an invisible disability. It can be, it can be strange to let

people know that actually, even though I'm a big, tall, strong guy, I can't see where I'm going.

**Ramze:** I agree.

**Jesse:** It's something that even I wrestle with now, because I'm a kind of a bigger guy and I don't have a cane, as you mentioned as well. So there's all these perceptions. There's all the assumptions about us and it makes life a little bit more difficult, but I really do like how society has changed and the platforms we have more to talk about it. I don't know if you can relate to me what I will say in there as well.

**Ramze:** Yeah, definitely. I agree, the younger you are, you're not really sort of aware of if people see the way you are basically with a visual impairment. Like for me, an example for when I was younger in my teens and early twenties I'll play football with people with vision impairment. So I'll play football with them, you know, three days, three times a week and they didn't know that I have a problem so lot of people would see me and think, Oh, you don't have a vision impairment, but of course I do have that and sometimes struggle with things whether it's studying or sometimes in work it's this assumption or a conception that people make that we have to sort of educate people. People might see you and think, okay, why is he not replying to me? Why is he not waving back at me? If they don't know you, they should really come up to you and say to you in a polite way....hi there. I just saw you is there anything that you need, are you okay then you could explain about your condition and then they will be like oh, that's fine. Especially if it's an office situation because then you would see them every day so that they would then understand instead of them being angry and running away or moving away, so that sort of education, I believe is the most important thing when it comes to visual hidden disabilities that people cannot see.

**Jesse:** I know this has got to be quite a difficult question to answer, but do you have any ideas on what could help? I mean me and you have different visual impairments, but for you specifically, do you think there's anything additional that people aren't doing. That could help you, it's a broad question because there's many different ways and many different aspects, whether it's job or whether it's outside, or is there anything you think that, you know what, I think this would help in this regard, anything that comes to mind or anything you've thought about

**Ramze:** Specifically what are we talking about here at work or in general?

**Jesse:** Anything in general, anything to help, and everything helps. You can start with work. If you want to start with your role in the trust, because you said that it took a while for you to get the equipment you need. In the meantime, in that interim, between you getting what you need and having to



wait, would there have been anything else that could have been put in place in the middle or anything that could have helped you? Because between that time it might've been a struggle for you with waiting for the equipment to actually come. Was there anything that could have helped you between that time?

**Ramze:** Oh, having the equipment earlier or sooner would have!

**Jesse:** Of course.

**Ramze:** That's something I'm not sure anybody else could have helped with. It helped my manager being patient and helping me and chasing it up with me as well.

**Jesse:** Regarding the chasing do you think there's anything that could expedite this? If there was something that could kind of expedite the chase up of side of things? I think some people could have a disability where things are more of a priority. For example, someone could have really bad back a really bad back injury and if they don't have the chair that they need, it could exacerbate. I mean we're just brainstorming here, but I'm just wondering it's stuff like that situation where things could be put in place to help, but in your case you said that really, it just needed to happen faster.

**Ramze:** Yeah, definitely a lot faster than, you know, than the three months or more. It took for it to happen from, you know, getting the equipment to installing it. It still has bugs with it right now. There's a lot more the organisation can do definitely to help. I do admire the organisation allowing access to work people to come in and review in a different manner. Well no one is perfect, so we all can improve and we all can suggest ways to improve. Like you said, we can definitely help chase up so people can highlight, they have disability and they need this for their work. So maybe if people see that, then they can help them solve it quicker.

**Jesse:** What software specifically are you using to help your work? Because some people might want to know what you're using and what works best for you, because I had to use a software for windows that was called zoom text, but that was in the previous role and I heard it doesn't play nice with the trust systems PIM's and stuff like that. So what software, did they recommend for you? What works for you?

**Ramze:** I was recommended a software called Dolphin supernova magnifier

**Jesse:** Dolphin supernova, magnifier?

**Ramze:** That's the one I know it's a long fancy name but yeah, that's the one that was recommended. Unfortunately I'm not using it at the moment because I can't, like you said, it doesn't work with our systems. It doesn't recognise it.

So there is a lot of crashing, a lot of freezing. So I'm just using the built-in windows, magnifier and shortcut keys control and plus

**Jesse:** Yes, exactly.

**Ramze:** It would make it easier to just buy Dell. It would be very good to use because it has different features. So you can increase a lot more. He's got a speech as well, so you can highlight something and then it will talk it back to you. So instead of having to read something, you can just, you know, put your headphones on and listen to what's going on the screen this would help together and save some time in the future.

**Jesse:** So outside of work, how are you using tech to make your life easier outside of work? Just to live generally better and I'm talking about technology, other things you might be using, what, what makes your life easier?

**Ramze:** I use the usual smart phone, so my smart phone, software large font and accessibility features. I also have an iPad.

**Jesse:** Do you prefer Android or iPhone? I'm just curious.

**Ramze:** I brought an Android phone.

**Jesse:** You've got an iPad and the Android phone.

**Ramze:** Yeah. That's what I prefer, because I like to have sort of different systems because I like to play around with the systems. So back in the day when I was younger, I used to tweak within these systems, especially with the Apple system because it's very locked in, that closes you in so I like to sort of experiment with things

**Jesse:** So, which, which platform do you think has the best accessibility features out of the two in your mind is working best for you?

**Ramze:** I would say Apple has the best accessibility system, because it has text to speech. It has the magnification. It's a lot easier to do you three fingers and sort of, you can magnify in and it helps a lot. It's a lot easier to use as an extra features. Whereas Android is a bit more technical. You need to tweak a bit more.

**Jesse:** I think, as you mentioned there, the Apple one's built in it's free, but with Android you might have to purchase the third party apps that actually help, you know, match up with Apple. I actually did. I'm all Android. I use mostly Android and I found that you've had to purchase stuff, but I do want to say as a resource there's a YouTube channel called **live accessible** and I think it's a partially sighted blind lady where she recommends software for the visually impaired on both iOS and Android as well.



**Ramze:** There's an application on Apple called CNI. So that helps read notes.

**Jesse:** what's it called? Sorry, I missed the C,

**Ramze:** CNAI

**Jesse:** C N A I, is that augmented reality? Is that what that is?

**Ramze:** Sort of, I guess. You can point your camera at, for example a 10 pound note and it will say this is a 10 pound note. So things of that nature, or you can point out, for example, in the store, you can point it out at the products and they'll read you what's going on, you know, what the product says and the prices.

**Jesse:** Wow. That's great.

**Ramze:** Yeah, I'm sure there's another one, I enjoy this one.

**Jesse:** Was that a free application or was that a paid for one?

**Ramze:** It's a free one.

**Jesse:** Wow. I mean, that's great. Got some great resources! Oh, I love that. I'm a techno nerd. How is your life outside work? How are you in general? I mean this is not just about the work side, the life side as well, your connections, your stability force around you?

**Ramze:** I would say because I've got understanding sort of friends and great family it does mean I can do wherever I want to do, outside of work there's an organisation called Metro blind sports for the visually impaired.

**Jesse:** Did you say Metro blind sport?

**Ramze:** Yeah. So I signed up with them, like over a year ago now. So I do football with them. When we went there, they used to have inside days and we have a three hour session for Saturday mornings. So they do other things as well. So cycling, sailing, all different aspects of sport, so activities walks.

**Jesse:** Is that part of the Metro newspaper? The Metro.

**Ramze:** No this is a different organisation.

**Jesse:** Oh, it was the first part. Metro

**Ramze:** It's easy to sign up and become a member and then they'll send you newsletters about what's going on in London, it's between London area and you can just give them a call and do whatever sport you want to do.

**Jesse:** Amazing. That's so fun. Again, I'm learning so much. You've given so much tidbits here and there that I need to follow up on some of that too. I

know that we are in a pandemic at the time of this recording, February, 2021, but, you know, hopefully they might be doing something virtually in the meantime, I don't know, maybe.

**Ramze:** They hope to get a lot more activities outside in the near future and you may have to bring in your own equipment and things like that. It depends.

**Jesse:** Yeah, that's fantastic. I mean, you've given so much food for thought. I don't want to take up all of the time in the world and just, you're a very busy man, but I want to ask you, finally, cause I think we've caught up and touch a lot of bases that I wanted to cover with you, but is there anything else you'd want to cover you think I missed? Anything else. I'm going to give you a free platform to speak your mind on anything that I might not have put forward to you,

**Ramze:** Within the work side?

**Jesse:** Anything you find relevant it's completely up to you.

**Ramze:** I guess within, especially with management division, I guess one of the things I want to say is that if you do have it, or anyone knows that someone else has, I guess it's sort of like having that support. It also helps to never give up. So that's another motto that I have never give up. So always keep going. Just because you see something stop you know, just kept going that's to keep trying, sometimes either you can have hiccups here and there. Also educating others about vision impairment because I'm sure there are a lot of people out there that do not know what kind of visual impairments are out there. So they just think one thing you're blind. Or you're you, you can see, they think there's nothing in the middle. So we have to educate those people, that there are things in the middle. So partially sighted people to have some vision, definitely I would love to educate people a lot more about that within the trust as well. So I would love to in the future do like a topic on that or visual impairment

**Jesse:** Couldn't agree more. Yeah like most Disabilities or long-term health conditions, it's a spectrum and you know, we all see differently and we all have different needs. So we do need to have that communication line and education open and a platform open to learn from each other and our experiences and you have given us a lot of helpful tips and advice. I really appreciate you taking the time to share that with us. You've been with the trust working for Essentia and we really rely on you guys. So you're doing an apprenticeship actually with the trust. How long is the Apprenticeship for because are you going to basically upgrade from the apprenticeship to the full role? Or are you looking to move? I know I'm jumping a bit, but I'm actually interested.

**Ramze:** Yeah, definitely my assessment's coming up soon, so I'm going to do that hopefully, and then stay with, with the department I'm with. So whether they have a role for me there or not hopefully I'll find out soon in the next two or three months what's going on. So of course, I would like to stay within the trust within the organization. There's a lot of good and a lot of things I would like to contribute to the trust that I'm bringing forward and be part of, like I said, the organisation the NHS, is an amazing thing to be part of and you know, I'm helping the organisation grow and become one of the best in the UK. I believe that's one of our goals.

**Jesse:** That's our intention. That is our wild intention to grow and hopefully this platform will grow and speaking about apprenticeships. I remember on our last meeting of the staff disability forum, I remember Jenny Hull, our chair for the forum. She actually forwarded the email about the apprenticeship scheme and I found that really helpful. So guys, if you're listening, you definitely want to join us on the staff disability forum for our monthly meetings. I believe it's every third Thursday of the month. I might be wrong, but.

**Ramze:** That's right. Yeah. It's every third Thursday of the month.

**Jesse:** Cool. I'll put a link in the description below, but there's a lot of apprenticeships. There's a lot of opportunities and I'm glad we're speaking to someone who's actually in the apprenticeship scheme and it's working out for them. They get in a lot of great support. A lot of positivity, which is great. Ramsey. Thank you so much.

**Ramze:** Definitely so one thing I would say on the apprenticeship scheme is there's a lot of levels. So there's from level. Two three, four or upwards, even you could do a masters with us as an apprentice so don't think just because it's an apprenticeship, it sounds like it's for a 16 to 24 year old person, there are a lot older people that are doing apprenticeships, it helps you to up-skill and it gives you plenty of work experience in a different field that you might not have done. So definitely there's a lot that an apprentice can offer the trust.

**Jesse:** It is definitely open to everyone. So I want to thank Jenny for forwarding this to our Forum and I would just want to let you guys listening that apprenticeship scheme is open and I believe in February they're having a webinar.

**Ramze:** Yeah. Tune in. Also info in the staff bulletins where it tells you a lot about that as well and you can also email the apprenticeship team to find out more.

**Jesse:** We'll put that in the description of this podcast, thank you Ramsey. I really appreciate it. Really enjoyed it. And I found this very, very plentiful in tools and tips. I actually want to start writing down a lot of these.

**Ramze:** No problem. I hope we can do another follow up on, in the future where we can definitely get into technology and can help and give advice to those that need it. So definitely sounds great.

**Jesse:** No, thank you so much for being on and guys, if you're listening to this and you're also want to be part of the podcast, I put a link in the description. I'll put a link to my email, cause we're always looking for people to have on right now, the schedule is monthly. We want to have one colleague on monthly. We know its lockdown and schedules can be a bit all over the place and things are changing with the world situation, but we're trying. We want to keep it going and we want to hear your story. So please stay tuned. Thanks for the support. Thank you for listening more than anything else. Thank you for subscribing. Spread the word. Please share this podcast on LinkedIn or through your contact groups or through email, we really appreciate it and we look forward to hearing your story and sharing more stories, sharing the platform and just continuing the Diverse inclusion conversation and just learning from each other. So thanks for being on and guy's thanks for being part of this take care, and we will see you on the next recording.

### **More information**

Anyone wanting to hear more about apprenticeships or to attend any of the webinars, please contact a member of the apprenticeship team, [apprenticeships@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@gstt.nhs.uk).

To find out more about our Staff Disability Forum please [visit GTi](#).